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ABSTRACT

The Real Experiences for Alternatives in Living Program (REAL) employs three components in an attempt to alter positively the lives of inner-city male youths and to provide indigenous role models within a day care setting to school-age children enrolled therein. These components are informal and formal on-the-job inservice training in child development, provision of services such as consumer and legal education, physical exams, nutrition information, and formalized training in child development. Two hypotheses are tested as part of the program evaluation: that the work training experience is beneficial to the trainees, and that the day care children will identify with the youth and benefit from the cross age relationships. Results obtained from interviews with trainees, agency staff, and children are considered to indicate that the program is beneficial to both youth and children, that the children relate positively to the youth, and that the program expands the life chances of all the participants. Criticisms of the program center around the quality of service provided to the youth. Both staff and youth agreed on the need for increased counseling and the need for followup at the end of the program. (Author/AM)

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FINAL EVALUATION

PROJECT: C.P.A. Youth Motivation Through Day Care Demonstration

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION: Crime Prevention Association
250 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

GRANT NO.: OCD-CB-308

PROJECT PERIOD: 9-1-72 through 8-31-74

EVALUATORS: Audrey Pittman, MSW, Temple University
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PROJECT: C.P.A. Youth Motivation Through Day Care Demonstration

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The REAL (Real Experiences for Alternatives in Living) program employed three major components in an attempt to positively affect the lives of inner-city male youths, and at the same time to provide indigenous role models within the day care setting to the school-age children served therein.

The three components were:

1. Informal and Formal on-the-job inservice training in child development in conjunction with carrying responsible work roles and relationships with elementary school-aged children.

2. Concrete services to the trainees (vocational and educational testing and counselling, complete physical examination and treatment when needed in all health areas, consumer and legal education and service, and exposure to various alternative life-opportunities.

3. Formalized training in Child Development within a a structured classroom setting.

The project tested two hypotheses:

1. The work-training experience will be beneficial for the trainees, who will serve as positive role models for the children.

2. The Day Care children will identify with the indigenous youth and benefit from their cross-age relationships.

These hypotheses were tested as a part of an evaluation of the program which was done by Temple's School of Social Administration following the initial ten months of the program. The Muldoon and Brosnahan Self-Descriptive Check List and the High School Personality Questionnaire were administered to the trainees at the beginning of the project and after ten months in order to determine movem ent in regard to the items comprising the check list. Children enrolled in the Day Care Program were interviewed in order to determine their perception of the trainees as helping persons in relation to them.

The present evaluation occurred at the end of the project period. Interviews with the trainees and with staff members of the agencies in which they were employed were conducted with the aim of securing answers to the following questions:

1. What did you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

2. Was the experience beneficial to the REAL participants?

3. Was the experience beneficial for the Day Care program?

4. Did the Day Care children identify with the REAL participants?

5. What is your overall opinion of the program?

The interview with the trainees occurred in a group meeting led by one of the instructors of the formalized class. This person is a member of the Graduate Faculty of Temple University's School of Social Administration. By the time of the meeting, the REAL project, as a project, had ended. Some of the participants had been hired by the agency. Those who had not been hired were asked to attend the meeting, which they did willingly.

Staff persons from three of the four agencies in which REAL participants worked were interviewed on a one-to-one basis. The interviews were informal in structure, and the interviewees were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially.

In this report, the responses of the REAL participants and those of the staff will be treated separately. Comments and perceptions of the evaluators will appear at the conclusion of the report.

ASSESSMENT OF THE REAL PROGRAM BY THE TRAINEES

The young men who participated in the REAL program expressed the unanimous belief that the experience was beneficial to them. In commenting upon specific aspects of the program, they stated that the trips to places of interest and cultural events were as enjoyable to them as to the Day Care children. Those who participated in the trip to New York City, which culminated the class in Child and Self-Development, were especially impressed with this experience and opportunity. The aspect of this experience which pleased them most was the fact that they were in a setting created, staffed, and run by, and for black people. They stated that on many other similar occasions (trips to various places and events), they felt uncomfortable and out of place, but this was not the case during their visit to the National Black Theater.

The food was another aspect of their experience which impressed the REAL participants. For many, the regular and well-prepared meals shared with the Day Care children constituted the best eating experiences of their own lives. The learnings about nutrition (which was supposed to be passed along to the Day Care children) impressed them considerably. Though in most instances, the REAL participants carried adult roles in some aspects of the functioning outside the program. There was relating to food some light shed on past and present deprivations in this area, as well as pointing up their still adolescent physical and mental state. An aspect of the classes which was enjoyed by even the most reluctant scholar was the two visits to Temple's dormitory cafeteria, in which unlimited servings is the rule. In this never-before-experienced

situation, they moved from disbelief to overjoyed gluttony in a very short time.

Not surprisingly, there was some negative reaction to the classes. For many of the REAL participants, school has a negative connotation due to past failures in this setting. Some were able to move beyond this and to benefit from the relatively benign, non-demanding setting of the classes structured for the REAL program. Since no writing was required, and all tasks requiring reading were done in small groups (assuring that at least one member possessed adequacy in reading), there was no likelihood of anyone being embarrassed in these classes by his poor scholarship. Still, those who had experienced the least success in school remained wary to the end, and probably would not have attended the classes had they been given a real choice about doing so.

Those with some capacity for functioning in a school setting felt positively about the classes and benefitted from them. They were able to take the information and to relate it to the children with whom they worked as well as to their own lives and functioning.

The work experience was felt, by most of the REAL participants, as valuable. For most, this was the first job, and the opportunity to learn how to have and hold employment was a preparation for subsequent employment experiences. The self-discipline involved in such things as punctuality, following instructions, behaving in terms of the needs of others (the children) rather than on impulse, and consistent attendance, was a good learning experience for those able to utilize it. For others, being expected to function competently in these areas was experienced as harrassment.

There was a general feeling, even among those who considered themselves as having been successful in the program, that the agency was too heavy-handed in its use of authority in relation to the REAL participants. They specifically referred to the fact that some of their salary was withheld from their checks and put into escrow for their later use, though some would have preferred that this not be done. Also, they resented the fact that attendance in the classes was mandatory, and that this was enforced by the agency' s refusal to allow those who did not attend class to work that day. This meant that failure to attend class resulted in the loss of a day's pay. The trainees expressed the feeling that class attendance should have been voluntary.

The opportunity to have health needs met without charge was unanimously felt to be beneficial, as were the counselling in regard to employment and the support received from the agency in regard to educational advancement. Some of the participants expressed the feeling that there should have been more counselling in regard to problems of daily living and problems encountered in the work setting. The evaluator had the feeling that some of the least successful participants held a vague belief that increased quantities of counselling would have increased their success ratio.

Despite some negative comments, an overwhelmingly positive feeling about the REAL program was expressed by the participants. For most, it was a definite alternative to a life-style which might have led to problems with gangs and/or the law. For those who were employed by the agency at the conclusion of the program, the program provided an entree

to employment for which they would not have been qualified had there been no program. Those who were not employed were aware of their responsibility in this (poor attendance, poor performance, insubordination, etc.) but felt they should have received help in moving into something else when the program ended. At present, they continue to spend a great deal of time hanging around the agency in which they worked while in the program, apparently not much better off than before the program was initiated, in regard to finances and employment.

ASSESSMENT OF THE REAL PROGRAM BY AGENCY STAFF

As has been stated, one-to-one, informally-structured interviews were conducted with staff persons in three of the four agencies in which REAL participants were employed. The interviewees included social workers, counsellors, and Child Care Personnel.

There was concurrence on the following positive points in regard to the program:

1. The program was beneficial to both the REAL participants and the Day Care children with whom they worked.

2. The Day Care children were able to relate positively to the REAL participants within the setting of the agency, and the benefits of this spilled over into their contacts in the neighborhood.

3. The program provided opportunities for the realization of their potential for some of the participants.

4. The program expanded the horizons of all of the participants. The trips on which they accompanied the Day Care children, their attendance in classes on Temple's campus, the information they received about resources for their further development, and the experience of participating actively in a work setting on a regular basis, were highly beneficial.

5. The opportunity to learn from competent workers by working with them provided not only work skills, but also provided positive role models for the REAL participants.

6. Many of the participants received significant boosts to their self-esteem through the training and experience which led to their competent functioning on the job. Also, the educational experiences and educational advances achieved by some, led to the opening up of career goals.

7. The attention given to the health needs of the participants was beneficial for all.

There was general agreement among staff members regarding the following negative aspects of the program:

1. Staff was not adequately oriented to the REAL program at its beginning. The REAL participants were placed in work settings without the staff's having a clear perception regarding the goals, functions and intent of the program. This led to many problems for staff and REAL participants alike.

2. More attention should have been paid to the placement of the REAL participants, so that all would be working directly with the most competent staff members. This was not the case in all instances, and some staff members felt that negative role modelling occurred for some of the participants.

3. More intensive counselling should have been provided for the participants' day-to-day problems. Initially, they had regular group sessions, in which they could share their feelings about what they were doing, but this was discontinued. Some staff felt that this kind of service should have existed for the duration of the program. Also, some staff felt that the boys needed more help with personal problems.

4. There should have been some kind of follow-up program for those not hired by the agency.

As is to be expected, individual staff members had their own ideas about how the program should have been run, and could point to instances which supported their feelings and ideas. The above points, however, were felt as significant by the predominance of those interviewed.

Some staff members felt that the recruitment of participants should have been done differently. These people saw the failure of some REAL participants to advance in the program as being directly related to aspects of their personality and functioning which were apparent when they began the program. Therefore, according to their reasoning, participants should have been selected on the basis of their expressed interest in and ability to continue their education. It was felt that the participants benefitted from the program in direct proportion to their contributions to it. Therefore, a weeding-out of some at the beginning might have resulted in greater overall benefits.

An ambiguity about the roles of the REAL participants was cited as problematic by some staff members. They felt that the expectations of the participants was not always made clear to staff and participants, so that infractions of rules by trainees were often regarded in the same manner as if they had been committed by regular employees. It was felt that a better orientation of staff to the trainee role of the REAL participants would have resulted in more support and less criticism from staff for the young men. One staff person felt that the performance of the REAL participants was hampered by the fact that clear expectations were not set forth for them in some instances. At one site, where approximately seven REAL participants were placed, the young men developed a sub-group, which fact interfered with their integration with the regular staff. One of the interviewees felt that this hampered their learning, as feeling a part of a setting is important to learning to function comfortably in it.

Most of the staff felt that the REAL participants benefitted from the class. Some saw the opportunity to talk about themselves as beneficial. Others could see changes in the trainees' handling of the children, and related these behavioral changes to classroom learnings. All the interviewees noted individual differences in the trainees' responses to the class, stating that some benefitted from and enjoyed the experience, some resented having to be involved, and some were simply overwhelmed by it.

As was true of the REAL participants themselves, the staff felt, generally, that the REAL program was beneficial to both the participants and the Day Care program. While there were criticisms of specific aspects of the program, and differences of opinion as to how specific tasks could and should have been done, the predominant reaction of the staff was positive.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Interviews with the participants in the REAL program and with persons employed in the agencies in which they were placed were conducted in order to determine opinions as to the value of the program for both the young men who participated in the project and the Day Care children who were served by the participants.

There is general agreement among those interviewed that the program provided positive benefits for both. Criticisms of the program center about the quality of the service provided to the participant-trainees, with trainees having negative comments about the use of authority by the program and the extent to which personal counselling was provided, and staff expressing negatives around the manner in which the program was introduced to the agency and the lack of clarity regarding the roles of the trainees in the agency. In the areas of need for increased counselling and the need for follow-up at the end of the program, there was concurrence between staff and participants.

None of the above-mentioned negatives were seen by any of those interviewed as overshadowing the positive benefits of the REAL program for the participants. There was general agreement that the trainees did receive good health care, counselling, expanded educational experiences, expanded experiential horizons, an opportunity to learn work skills, and opportunities for positive role modelling in the work setting. These can only be beneficial in enhancing the life-chances of the trainees in the future.

It is the opinion of the evaluators, who also had the opportunity to work with the trainees in the classroom for two semesters, that there were definite gains for the trainees during the year, and that these were directly related to their experiences within the program.

The model of the REAL project seems workable for application in various work settings. Its three-pronged attack upon the physical, social and emotional deprivation which characterizes the lives of so many inner-city young people, is infinitely more sensible than the plethora of similar projects which seek to offer remediation in one area of the participants' situation while ignoring other glaring problems and lacks which directly affect the participants' ability to make effective use of the program. The easily predictable failure of these programs has added grist to the mill of victim-blaming which often is held up as justification for the failure of such programs to meet their goals. It is the evaluators' opinion that projects on the model of the REAL program can provide positive alternatives for many of the male and female young people in our society who currently lack such options due to the closed opportunity structure which currently shapes their lives.

SYLLABUS

HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES:

1. To acquaint the students with two theories of human development.
2. To enable the student to apply the concepts of these theories in understanding their own development and that of the children with whom they work.
3. To enable the students to apply their learnings about human development and needs to their work with children by being able to structure programs and activities according to the developmental level of the children involved.
4. To increase the students' understanding of the ways in which social and psychological factors affect human development.

SESSION I: Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of Man. Lecture and discussion

SESSION 2: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Lecture and discussion.

SESSION 3: Film: "The Quiet Ones" (concerns a deprived black boy who receives residential treatment at the Wyltwyck School). Discussion regarding developmental needs and deficits as applied to Erickson's and Maslow's theories.

SESSION 4: Small Group Task. Analysis of "The Somebody" (concerns an adolescent Chicano ex-gang member who indulges in writing on walls. In the story, he shares his feelings about his life). The groups are asked to answer questions about the story and share their answers in a total-class discussion.

SESSION 5: Normal Development. Havighurst's Developmental Tasks, and Gesell's Chart of Normal Development. Lecture and Discussion.

SESSION 6: Field Trip. A visit to a Montessori School. (Focus is on the fact that this is an educational setting which takes into account the individuality as well as the developmental commonalities of children, encouraging their optimal development. Another goal was to expose the trainees to a school setting totally unlike that of their past experience.

This group of sessions focused upon the developmental milestones and needs of the child from birth to adolescence. The second group will deal with the remaining stages of the life cycle.

SESSION 7: Adolescence. Physical and psychological changes. The Identity Crisis. Lecture and discussion.

SESSION 8: Adolescence. The problems of Identity for Black youth. Aids for positive resolution. Lecture and discussion.

SESSION 9: Young Adulthood; Roles and Responsibilities. Lecture, discussion and small-group tasks.

SESSION 10: Middle Adulthood and Old Age. Family Concepts.

SESSION 11: Community supports for development and functioning. Brief talks describing service agencies by representatives from various community agencies.

SESSION 12: Continued Education as an Option for the Future. Participation in the Outreach Project of Temple University's Department of College Relations. Involved a tour of the campus, talks from the Admissions, Financial Aid, and Special Recruitment departments of the University, and lunch in a dormitory cafeteria.

SYLLABUS

EXPLORING THE SELF

OBJECTIVES:

1. To discover areas of student interest.
2. To provide exposure to people practicing in professions or vocations in those areas of interest indicated by students.
3. To increase student self-awareness and communication skills through effective education.

SESSION 1: Group Discussion. Students were asked to indicate their personal interests and to help develop plans for future classes. From this developed the agenda for sessions two through five.

SESSION 2: The Importance of Building Self Esteem. Ways of feeling good about oneself and helping others to like themselves. Brief talk by Herschel Ross, Assistant Professor of Social Administration, Temple University. Small group tasks. Assignment: Be prepared to describe an instance of esteem-building which you carried out.

SESSION 3: Continued Education. Speakers from Temple University. Representatives from Special Recruitment Programs.

SESSION 4: Day Care as a community service; Day Care as a career. Brief talk by Ms. Jean Jones, Philadelphia Day Care Program, and discussion led by Ms. Jones.

SESSION 5: Establishing Relationships: Family relationships; Man - Woman relationships; Peer relationships; Helping Relationships.

SESSION 6: Communication: How to listen; Responding to feeling; Expressing feelings in a positive way.

SESSIONS 6 - 11: Affective Education

1. Body Language. (Non-verbal communication, Eye Contact, Trust, Dependency.)
2. Conformity (The Circle Game, Breaking In, Trusting Senses, Non-Sense Walk).
3. Feedback. (Motive Projection, Effective Listening, the Rumor Game, Self-Concept, Self image.)
4. Values (Morality, Apathy, Sexism, Racism.)

Trainees played the above-listed "games", after which there were group discussions of the various objectives hidden in the activities.

SESSION 12: Review and Summary of course. Revisit to the dormitory cafeteria.

CULMINATING EVENT: A day-long trip to New York city to view a performance of the National Black Theater.

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